

Please cancel claims 1-28, and add new claims 29-34 as set forth below:

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Canceled) A method of preparing a patient for the insertion of a needle into a vein, comprising the steps of:
 - a. providing an inflatable tourniquet including an inflatable occluding band, a pump, and a pressure relief valve;
 - b. placing said occluding band about a limb of a patient; and
 - c. inflating said occluding band using said pump, so as to produce sufficient pressure within said occluding band to block blood flow in said vein of said patient.
2. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 1, wherein said inflating is sufficient to block arterial flow to said vein.
3. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 1, wherein said inflating is initially sufficient to block arterial flow to said vein.
4. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the step of providing a gauge with a needle that pulses with each cardiac contraction of said patient.
5. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the step of palpation of said patient's pulse.
6. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 5, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure when said pulse is no longer palpable.
7. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 6, further comprising the step of detecting said pulse.

8. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 7, further comprising the step of ceasing said releasing of said pressure when said pulse is detected.
9. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 3, further comprising the step of providing an indicator for detecting said patient's pulse and signaling thereof.
10. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 9, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure when said pulse is no longer palpable.
11. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 10, further comprising the step of detecting said pulse.
12. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 11, further comprising the step of ceasing said releasing of said pressure when said pulse is detected.
13. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 13, further comprising the step of releasing said pressure until said vein protrudes.
14. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 13, wherein said releasing is performed in steps so as to allow sufficient time for the blood flow to build up within said vein.
15. (Canceled) The method of preparing a patient in accordance with claim 14, further comprising the step of inserting a needle into said vein.
16. (Canceled) An inflatable tourniquet comprising:
 - a. an inflatable occluding band, for placement about a limb of a patient;
 - b. a pump for inflating said occluding band, wherein said pump is capable of producing sufficient pressure within said occluding band so as to block blood flow in a vein of said patient;

- c. a fluid conduit, in fluid communication between said occluding band and said pump; and
 - d. a pressure relief valve, for releasing the fluid from said occluding band.
17. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 16, wherein said tourniquet does not include a mechanism for measuring blood pressure.
18. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 17, further comprising a pressure gauge, for measuring pressure within said tourniquet.
19. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 18, further comprising an indicator, for sensing and indicating said patient's pulse.
20. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 19, wherein said indicator emits a signal in response to said sensing of said pulse.
21. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 20, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is a visual signal.
22. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 20, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is an audio signal.
23. (Canceled) An inflatable tourniquet consisting of:
- a. an inflatable occluding band, for placement about a limb of a patient;
 - b. a pump for inflating said occluding band, wherein said pump is capable of producing sufficient pressure within said occluding band so as to block blood flow in a vein of said patient;
 - c. a fluid conduit, in fluid communication between said occluding band and said pump; and
 - d. a pressure relief valve, for releasing the fluid from said occluding band.

24. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 23, further consisting of a pressure gauge, for measuring pressure within said tourniquet.
25. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 23, further consisting of an indicator, for sensing and indicating said patient's pulse.
26. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 25, wherein said indicator emits a signal in response to said sensing of said pulse.
27. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 26, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is a visual signal.
28. (Canceled) The inflatable tourniquet in accordance with claim 26, wherein said signal in response to said sensing of said pulse is an audio signal.
29. (New) A method of facilitating insertion of a needle into a desired vein in a limb of a human subject for intravenous fluid administration or extraction employing an inflatable pressure cuff, a pump connected to said cuff for inflating said cuff, an indicator for indicating a value corresponding to a pressure within said cuff, a valve for selectively reducing the pressure in said cuff, said method comprising:
 - (a) securing said pressure cuff around the limb containing the desired vein in which the needle is to be inserted;
 - (b) inflating said pressure cuff above a systolic pressure of the subject;
 - (c) reducing said pressure within said cuff via said valve;
 - (d) suspending further reducing of the pressure within said cuff via said valve when said indicator indicates pulses corresponding to cardiac contraction of the subject, whereby the desired vein is in a condition to facilitate needle insertion; and
 - (e) inserting the needle into the desired vein.

30. (New) A method as in claim 29, wherein said indicator is a gauge that provides a visual indication of the pressure within said cuff, and wherein step (d) comprises observing when the visual indication varies between higher and lower values.

31. (New) The method as in claim 30, wherein said method comprises further relieving the pressure in said cuff after step (e).

32. (New) Apparatus for facilitating insertion of a needle into a desired vein in a limb of a human subject for intravenous fluid administration or extraction by applying, about the limb of the subject, a vein occluding pressure above a systolic pressure of the subject, reducing the occluding pressure, and suspending pressure reduction when pulses corresponding to cardiac contraction of the subject are detected, whereupon access to the vein for needle insertion is facilitated, said apparatus comprising:

- (a) an inflatable pressure cuff adapted for use about the limb of the subject;
- (b) a pump connected to said cuff for inflating said cuff;
- (c) an indicator that indicates a pressure within said cuff; and
- (d) a valve for selectively reducing the pressure in said cuff, said valve further including means for suspending cuff pressure reduction responsive to said indicator indicating pulses corresponding to cardiac contraction of the subject.

33. (New) Apparatus as in claim 32, wherein said indicator is a gauge that provides a visual indication of the pressure within said cuff.

34. (New) Apparatus as in claim 32, wherein the valve further comprises means for further relieving the pressure in said cuff after needle insertion.